



CPCC  
036  
2023  
Volume7  
Issue7













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The Hammer  
Volume 7, Issue 7  
Spring 2023

Editor: Colin Hickey  
Art Director: Jordan Dawson  
Layout Design Director: Yonael Berhe  
Design Advisor: Brady Bone

Production Team: Bon Baldwin, Matthew Goodwin, Phil Gregory,  
Jeanette Kosorok, Sebastian Manrique, Emily Moss, Katryna Nickels,  
Priscilla Steele, Lily Swing, Dimitri Vaughan

# The Hammer

## Student Arts & Literature Magazine

Central Piedmont Community College

### Table of Contents

Preface	i
Ode to an INFP: Objects In Mirror are Lovelier Than They Appear	1
Intangible	2
Into the Fog of History	5
Ineffable	10
Rich and Bountiful Veins	13
Sun, Son.	14
Pallas' Pond	21
Ashen Feathers	22
Doctor's Appointment	25





# Preface

Central Piedmont Community College has campuses all over Mecklenburg county. It's a big place, with lots of people, and it is growing. People from all over the world come to our community, and to our school. But, while we are spread out across the area like butter over a biscuit, or avocado in a tortilla, or dhal on naan, it's when we come together that we really shine. This magazine shows the superb fruits of this coming together, and that collaboration, that fusion, is really the nexus of our community's originality and beauty.

The Hammer has been bringing students from our community together for a fascinating combination of visual, literary, and graphic art for seven years, and the collaboration has been getting richer and more interesting every year. It is a delightful combination of talent and hard work from across our community that, when taken alone, is impressive, but when we work together, it shows we can create something truly stunning.

The Hammer is moving and significant, because our students are passionate and inspirational. Please enjoy the product of their talents and collaboration.

They should be proud of it, and we should be proud of them. Dig in!

**- Colin Hickey**





# Ode to an INFP: Objects In Mirror are Lovelier Than They Appear

Jamila Brown

My mind is my mystique  
It is at times my child  
And my guardian  
I value thoughts and fancies  
For extensive periods, but you  
Don't see it because it is a wardrobe of  
InfiNitE imaginings  
And I don't see the dumpster heap filth  
Permeating high, so high to the heavens it  
Makes Babel look tame  
I see beauty in the writhing, mimicking  
Nuances of my mind  
At times  
I see perplexity and calmness  
Like a need to be freed  
In a void of uncertainty  
That is all wrapped behind a girl  
Always biting absentmindedly on  
Her lower lip

Biting away nerves  
Buttoning up courage  
The courageous words escape me  
At times  
Like a pen  
That runs out of ink  
They're crude and awkward and  
Vanquishing behind  
And that's all you see  
Unless you read the fine print  
But you don't see me  
And you're really missing out  
Because I am a  
FiNe SiTe

# Intangible

Jamila Brown

Sometimes when I should be sleeping  
I ruminate on my time here  
And it feels so vast  
And corporeal  
Like the difference between a phantom leg  
And a real leg  
It's only in my dreams that I escape  
The phantom life  
And occasionally this gut feeling overtakes me  
In my waking hours and reminds me that  
I am here  
I am flesh  
Boundless flesh  
I am power and legend  
I make ripples

I am rippled and ruined  
But I am here  
And it's frightening  
And maddening  
If you have lived your whole life believing  
It is entirely guided by some deus ex machina  
And suddenly are aware  
That you are really in control  
There is nothing more frightening than  
The realization that you are responsible  
For your own happiness except maybe  
The realization that you are responsible for  
Someone else's.





### **Portrait**

Olivia Gavin

Ink pens and Black marker  
2023



**Muscular Water**

James E. Rucker III  
Stoneware with custom glaze  
2022



# Into the Fog of History

Andrew Soriano

I met that young man for the first and last time on an idyllic spring day, the gentle winds caressing my cheek as I sat firmly upon a rock outside the entrance to the dark abyss. He was not the first to come, and I thought he would not be the last. So, I took him in before even saying hello, for surely I would speak of him to the next poor soul that had wandered near this place. He was not the tallest who had ever approached my cave; indeed, he had barely sprouted up above his father's knees before he came to die. While others came decked in mirror sheens of armor, he came dressed only in the tattered remains of what chanced upon a clawed beast. Nor was he the adventuring type, for rather than thick tree trunks like his forebears, his arms seemed like twigs ready to snap under the weight of the breeze. Last, to leave me unimpressed, he came not with claws of steel forged in legend but instead unarmed, save for a flimsy, dull hammer just smaller than his diminutive clenched fists.

"Well met," I lied.

"And who are you supposed to be?" he asked, staring into the maw of hell that awaited.

"Me? I am a mere bard who has sworn a duty to the fallen. A duty to warn travelers of the danger that awaits, and in so doing, tell you the story of those who came before."

His mouth darted down, distracted from my words, as he inspected the stone clinging to the top of the cave walls. I lamented the soon loss as one would the loss of day to night. Gone, yes, but soon another would take his place. He said to me, "Not sure I have time for all of that, stranger, but I would not rob you of your duty. What say you? Tell me of the greatest who came here, and I will judge myself against him."

"The greatest, perhaps, was ten seasons ago. A Knight of great renown, the heraldry of his shield was known from north to south, and he was working on east and west. He was a mountain of a man, standing three heads taller than me and perhaps five more than you. He was

clad in armor covered in the desperate claw marks of a hundred battles, yet it shined with the light of jewels in the mid-day sun. In his other hand, a sword, red as the blood of the enemies upon its blade, spoke a tale of death and woe even as it rested with peace and virtue in worthy hands. This was a knight, as far from you as you from a worm. No, farther!” Yet, the boy in front of me seemed to pay scant attention, his eyes hooked into the stone of his coming tomb.

“Can you smell that wretched stench, little man?” I continued to impress the danger upon him. “That smell like eggs left to cook in the sun for three years? It is dragon’s breath that leaks from the cave, and this man came prepared to meet it! He came seeking the glory of battle. Glory for himself. Glory for his liege. Glory for God, for the slaying of such a monster could impress even the kingdom of heaven! But it was not to be. Are you like such a man, little boy?”

He paused. Looking me in the eye for the first time, he said. “No. No, I am not like this man. This man came

for battle and glory. Me? I came to kill a dragon.” And with that for God and all to hear, he walked not into the pits of hell but only to their entrance. Having finally found the perfect stone, he struck with his pathetic hammer a blow that would ring through history. For where he struck, loose rock shifted and growled and soon rumbled and trembled like a stampede! In the passing of a butterfly’s wings, there soon stood no more cave entrance, and it came to me like a bloody dawn that within weeks the dragon would wither as harvest does in a draught. Vanished from this world as its cave had done.

Before I could even turn to him to ask his name, he was halfway down the forest road, back to whatever dirt pile he had crawled out from. He stopped nary a whisper of an instant to admire his work. Instead, he vanished into the fog of history, for as he had told me, his deed was done. Nothing more need be said by the likes of me!



**Fill in the Blank**

Akossi Kouadio

Oil on Canvas

2022





**Majungasaurus**

Andres Palacios

Phoenix Clay

2022



**Fluidity**  
Sejal Bowens  
Digital Photography  
2023



# Ineffable

Mo Pirela

Our love is indescribable  
Ineffable  
yet ordinary  
To the naked eye  
we are devoted friends  
only intimate in forms  
of self expression  
as far as ones understanding goes  
And we don't care to explain  
Our love is enduring  
Like historic  
Built in the cementing  
Of lives full of passion  
Our love doesn't have a name  
So call it what you wish  
upon a star  
A dream we never saw coming  
because we were asleep in our waking  
We were alive but had not lived yet  
Until we found our love  
it's a jarring thing

that we have captured  
like fireflies and butterflies  
in the moments when tears  
and technique  
speak our bliss  
intimate in forms  
of self expression  
Our love does not have a name  
Other than  
Ours  
To have and to hold  
From this day forward  
Until the end of time  
And I am not sure what to call it  
Because marriage is sterile  
And couple would divide us into  
The most justifying definition  
to dally  
is infinite  
So call it what you wish  
Upon a star



**Feet**  
Katherine Daniels  
B&W Charcoal  
2023





**Heartline**

Meghan Wall  
Red Rock- Highwater Clay  
2023



# Rich and Bountiful Veins

Rebecca Barham

Yes, I've been to those places.  
The fluorescent lights flicker softly still and I shudder at  
the bitterness of those ills -  
the stiff limp limbs  
the repression of whims.  
But, hear this!  
I've no shame in resting in that sanctuary for the too  
weary, too wary.  
I've assessed,  
And what was thought lost to loss did not depart.  
It did not depart.  
It's just not down those Hallways,  
No, not in those parts

Shut off that T.V.  
It only re-runs those reruns of those that depart,  
Walk out of that Hallway,  
The land of the Haunts,

Go down that dirt path in the green, wet woods.  
A stream flows,  
ALIVE and full of leaves and froth,  
Full of Leaves and Froth!  
Go down by the stream bed that's covered in moss,  
Covered in Moss!  
Just beneath the surface,  
Dig up the dirt, pick out the sparkly flecks,  
The stream washes away all the rest/the unrest,

Gold!  
It's Mine to refine.  
24 Karat veins below the surface  
From gangrene to gold- suture, assay, and  
Behold!  
I've got rich and bountiful veins.

# Sun, Son.

Melanie Diaz

Some spring morning, under France's misty fresh air, fog blanketed the countryside. White and gray clouds surround the fields. It veiled the lush forests, graining the view with a hazed film lens. It could leave a man's gaze dazed.

Which it did.

Frank, he stood by a picket fence, old of wear, but loved by earth's green. He stood there. Quiet. His eyes scattered around to the scene before him. The gentle winds brushed over his brown and silver-lined hair. His peace was undisturbed until the moisture of the air clouded his vision. He reached his hand up to slip off his glasses, wiping them with the sleeve of his sweater to clean. With slow circles, and a furrowed brow with a silent curse to accompany it, the glass was clear. He slid them back on, blinking to adjust the view and something new met his gaze. An array of golden strands.

"Flynn, chou, you'll get mud in the house." Frank chuckled, opening the gate of the fence to walk out, the

latch falling to a close as he went right through. He knelt right down to the blades of grass, smiling kindly out to his son.

Flynn sprinted across the field, mud-stained both on face and clothes, and barefooted for the soil to greet. The young boy kept his scrimmage with the wind, mouth wide open to "taste" the mist. Though his failed attempts finally brought him down from his skips. He looked over to his father, puffing out air until exhaling deeply, and scurried to him. Rubbing his nose and eye.

"Père, I couldn't— Um, the air—" Flynn scrunched his nose, pointing to his mouth then averting his eyes away from his father. Frank met him with a gentle laugh.

"The mist, Flynn, the mist. Your English is getting there. Don't get discouraged."

Flynn huffed out, turning his back to his father, though never moved. Frank chuckled. Proudful as his mother.

"Why don't we practice? Hm? I think that would be a good idea." And before Flynn could say a thing,

his father picked him right up. Setting him over his shoulders to carry and started to walk down the graveled road. The crunch of rocks sounded under his feet, along with a little French curse. . . .

They journeyed forward. Passing down other smaller homes. Frank hummed in his brisk walk, that hum soon turning to a gentle melody, then the lyrics of a song. Come fly with me, Frank Sinatra.

An accompaniment joined him. Flynn sang along, leaving Frank grinning, moving shoulders. Leaving Flynn to giggle at bits of the song.

“Donc, vous connaissez l’anglais, bon monsieur??” Frank mused.

Flynn laughed, shaking his head. “I only know English for Frank! The best one!”

Frank gasped, faking a hurt expression to his son. “You shouldn’t even know my first name, that is classified.”

Flynn rolled his eyes, patting his father’s head to keep him going, though humming as they walked.

Finally, Frank made it to where he wanted to take Flynn. They were surrounded by more fields, more grass, and the wine-scented hills of Bordeaux. The veil of the morning was slowly unfolding itself. The skies blue brightening, the air doing the work of pushing the clouds for a new day. Clearing the view away from the grainy screen.

Frank took a deep breath, closing his eyes for a second. Flynn settled his chin over his father’s head. Looking over the landscape, fiddling with his own glasses. They both stayed quiet. Enjoying the peace, until Frank broke the silence. “Flynn, what do you see?...”

Flynn straightened himself a little, scanning the landscape. “Um... A tree, the one here.” He pointed to the tall oak near them.

Frank nodded, setting his son down, then settled to the hill’s top to sit. “Right, what about it?”



Flynn shuffled his feet, looking at the oak, and stared up its leaves. "The leaves, green."

And at that moment, Frank's eyes lit, softening to Flynn and he pointed right over to Flynn's eyes. "Forest green, like your irises. Ok, what else?"

Flynn broke a little smile. "The flowers, red."

"Ah, the poppies, bright red as your shirt." Frank extended his hand to tickle his son's side, and more giggles spilled. "Ok, ok, what else?"

Flynn caught his breath, inhaling, then exhaling slowly. He looked around the plains, though this time, he was puzzled. His brows go to a furrow, only seeing flowers and trees. There was the grass, but green had already been said. He looked to the clouds. "Ah! Cloud, white!" And he points to his teeth, smiling proudly.

Frank smiled more. "Very good, but you are missing one thing. Something very important."

Flynn took a step back, rubbing his chin, letting his eyes trail everywhere. Whatever, could his father have meant? There were no more colors or things to compare. He named them all.

Flynn walked around their little hill, searching high and low to find what he'd missed, and just as all seemed hopeless, a glare blinded his vision. Flynn shielded his eyes from a flash of light bouncing off his father's watch. He clicked his tongue, readying to say something before stopping. He looked to where the light reflected and turned around. Sunrise was here.

Flynn stayed quiet, marveling at the sight, his back fully turned and he held his hands together. His mouth was agape. "Sun. . . . Golden."

To that, Frank felt his entire being warm, his chest relax. He watched how his son's figure was outlined by the sun. He noted how the shades reflected his son's hair. Gold with gold, glistening in sweet honey. Just as his mother—

"I thought you two would be here."

The boys turned over to look behind them and Flynn gasped, turning around to jump in his mother's arms, who caught him. Squeezing her son, she takes him in arms, going to sit right next to her husband.

"Eloise, dearest, you made it just in time for golden hour." Frank softly hummed, leaning to kiss his wife's cheek.

Eloise chuckled, leaning on Frank's shoulder, and watched Flynn slip from her grasp to go play. "I certainly did...but didn't we have our golden hour already?" She smiled, looking at Flynn.

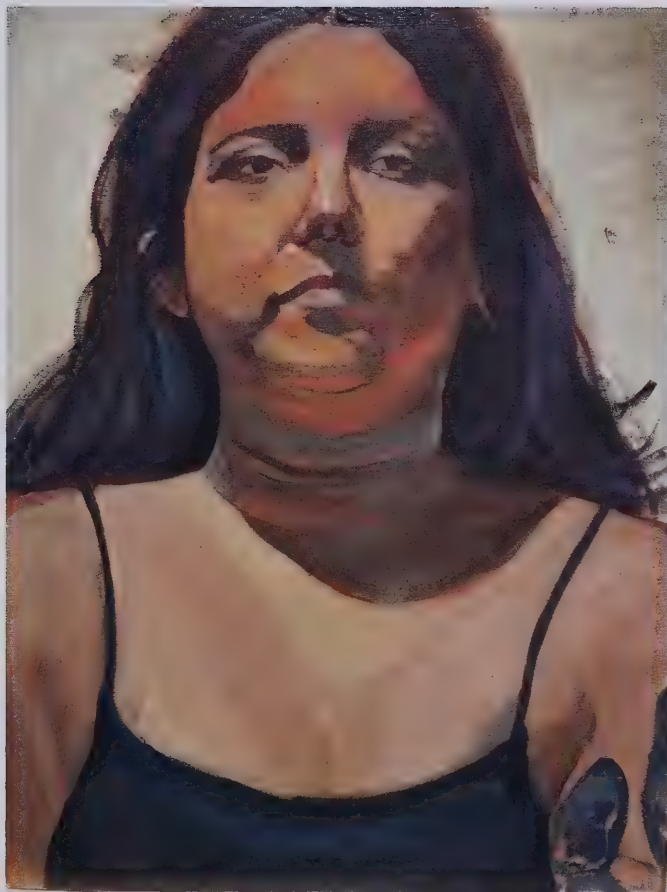
Frank smiled back, nodding. "We did, our golden child. . . ."



**We Tend to Miss  
the Finer Details of Life**

Chloe Harper  
Pen & Ink  
2022





**Sole**  
Anayetzi Muzquiz  
Oil on Canvas  
2023

**Traffic Cone**  
Zsófia Balázs  
Archival Inkjet Print  
2023



# Pallas' Pond

Ruben Evans

Snakes snicker and snap prudence at Pallas' Pond  
Lush glades and groves bestow it the name of Eden  
Leaves that glisten, branches that shimmer  
Radiant and mesmerizing beauty  
A profound pond at the center, perched  
Vigilant feathered creatures encircle it  
Fables and parables prance upon gusts of gossip  
“A glance within the pond is a look within...  
Its cerulean liquid is a conduit for clarity.”  
Peace of mind is its own paradise



# Ashen Feathers

Ruben Evans

Gather up the pieces of your former self,  
Collect the echoes of internal criticism,  
Assemble the doubts that's been projected,  
Piece together a vision of worthiness,  
Soar above the acts of suppression,  
Take caution of the cries of crows,  
Heed their presence as a harbinger,  
Spritz kerosene onto that which no longer serves you,  
Ignite an insatiable inferno of passion,  
Honor the ashen feathers signaling change,  
Harvest the ashes that's been gifted to you,  
Adamantly set ablaze your ambition and,  
Rise like a Phoenix,  
Coveted for its luminous white coat.



**Mercy Sisters**

Katherine Daniels  
Oil on canvas  
2023

**Sunrise in the Temple**  
Logan Smiley  
Watercolor & Pen  
2022





# Doctor's Appointment

Namrata Bingu

I'd like to request a doctor's note, please.  
I locked my heart up, you see,  
And I've forgotten how to reach it.  
Was it a key?  
I don't remember where I put it.  
Was it a combination of letters?  
Numbers? I don't remember who I told.

I was scared, you see, when I realized my  
fate.  
My back aches, but I will never  
have someone to massage it for me.  
One day,  
I will live in a house  
and be the only one  
who knows how the kitchen is organized.

I will always be alone in the rain,  
you see,  
and the only hand  
to offer me an umbrella

will be my own.  
I'll be alone at sunset and sunrise,  
every dawn and dusk  
a reminder  
of my affliction of aversion.

I'd like a doctor's note, please.  
One to hand every person I befriend  
as my apology.  
"I'm sorry. I've locked up my heart.  
Perhaps a crowbar will do the trick?"



**Soul Train**

Hailey Melgarejo  
Clay and enamel paint  
2022

**True North**

Bennett Allen

Copper sheet, Brass sheet, Sterling silver  
chain, Wire, and Findings  
2022





CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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